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ABSTRACT

This document discusses how to conduct a needs assessment for inservice teacher education. It states that the form or method of conducting a needs assessment must be decided upon after first considering teacher preferences, cost, and the capabilities of the local organization implementing the survey. Three methods of conducting needs assessment are described (oral, written, and a combination of both), and the advantages and disadvantages are presented. It is stated that after consideration has been given to the form or method, the type of needs assessment survey must be decided upon. The four types listed are (1) open-ended subjective responses, (2) the checklist variety, (3) scales, and (4) the discrepancy model. Sample instruments and an outline of a needs assessment workshop are then presented. (PB)

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NEEDS ASSESSMENT

FOR

INSERVICE EDUCATION

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR INSERVICE EDUCATION

There is no such thing as an inservice education Needs Assessment for a particular local association. For that matter, there is no such thing as a Needs Assessment for locals. Depending on 1) Purpose(s); 2) Receptiveness of survey audience to form/method/local situation; 3) Capability of the local organization to implement; 4) Costs; and 5) Other local prerequisites and concerns, there are many different ways to conduct a Needs Assessment.

Although the basic purpose of a Needs Assessment is intelligence/data gathering, the attendant purpose(s) could range from evaluating existing inservice conditions to inputting for goal/priority setting in order to establish effective professional development programs.

Once the purpose(s) has been clearly identified, it then becomes necessary to consider the receptiveness of the audience to the survey form/method/local association concerns. Since the "confidence level" or reliability of the needs assessment findings is related to the percentage of participants participating in the activity, in comparison to the potential audience, sensitivity to the receptiveness of the survey audience is essential. For example, if 90% of the potential audience participates, the local association can be more confident that the findings are indicative of teachers' feelings/concerns and more reliable than if only 70% of the teachers participated.

Past practice is usually a good index to receptiveness of teachers to the various forms and methods of conducting a Needs Assessment. If past practice has shown that teachers generally prefer open hearings or dialogue in area-wide meetings, then it might be foolish to attempt a Needs Assess-

ment that features a detailed checklist type of survey administered in the buildings. Furthermore, local situations play a very important role in the receptiveness of the audience. For instance, even though the local association might have the most perfect inservice Needs Assessment instrument or other survey method worked out, if the activity is the third association survey for the current school year, it can generally be predicted that teacher response, in terms of participation, will be poor.

Another important consideration to how and what kind of Needs Assessment to conduct is the capability of the local organization to implement a survey. If an association does not have strong building representatives (school representatives) in every building, then the association might consider conducting the Needs Assessment at area-wide or even district meetings, rather than in the individual buildings. The reverse could hold true if the association has strong building representatives.

Cost is another important factor which could dictate the kind of Needs Assessment to be conducted. If it is desired that teachers participate in a needs assessment activity during release time during the normal working day, the expense of the release time must either be borne by the association or the school district. If the local must buy the release time, this represents an additional cost to the Needs Assessment. Another area where cost comes in is in the tabulation and reporting process. Hand tabulation is usually rather inexpensive with costs for paper, pencils, adding machines/calculator rentals, and refreshments; whereas, computer/optical scanning machine time and print-out sheets, result in additional expense to the association.

With all these factors in mind, the association should also be aware of the form(s) (process/method) available to them. A Needs Assessment for inservice education can be handled either by a written or oral form, or even a combination of both.

A written form has numerous advantages, such as: 1) Each individual teacher's responses count; 2) Responses in writing provide "hands-on" data to work from and communicate (PR) with; and 3) Administration of the survey is usually fast.

The major disadvantage of the written form is the fact that survey questions may not be clearly understood or uniformly interpreted by the participants. Consequently, it is possible that the resulting data is not necessarily reliable. This situation requires a validation or follow-through procedure to confirm the reliability of the data, leading to a longer time-span before actual development of association action plans.

An oral form has its advantages in 1) Administration is a one-step process, including documentation by following through original responses with additional questions and 2) It is usually cheaper because there is no need for extra expenses such as equipment rental (i.e. adding machines, calculators, optical scanning machine/computer time), printing of questionnaires, etc.

The major drawbacks to an oral form rests with 1) The need for more intensive/perceptive training so that interviewers a) ask the same questions, b) anticipate participants questions and respond with generally the same answers, and c) have good interviewing skills, and 2) The inability to get responses from many teachers unless the local is a small association (35-100 teachers).

Data for a needs assessment can also be generated in small group meetings, sometimes held as part of a workshop on inservice education. One such plan calls for the teachers in a given school, at the time of a regular association or faculty meeting, to sit in small groups of five or six to talk about their concerns--and aspirations--for meaningful inservice education. The question posed must be precise and unambiguous yet open-ended enough to permit considerable free discussion. For instance, "When you think about teaching your class tomorrow, what is the one most pressing concern or anxiety you have about doing the best possible job?" Or, "As you think about next month or next semester, please indicate what different or additional concerns will be uppermost in your mind."

In the small groups of fellow teachers, with the assurance that a group report, not individual reports, will be made, it is possible for individuals under a minimum of threat also to "think aloud" about why they have a particular concern. Does it have something to do with students? With the school system? With the parents? With themselves? Probably all play a part, but the point is that for the purpose of an inservice education discussion, the emphasis should be on missing skills and knowledges teachers themselves feel they need.

Another type of question that can be discussed in small group meetings is preference for acquiring or renewing missing or rusty skills. For example, "What kinds of specific help would be most useful to you--magazine articles, conferences with other teachers, university or inservice classes, independent study...?"

Once consideration has been given to the form, then the local should seriously examine the most commonly used types of Needs Assessment survey

instruments. The list and examples which follow should not preclude any association from developing a modified instrument better suited to its purpose, costs, organizational capabilities, etc., as discussed earlier.

There are generally four types of instruments:

I. Open-ended subjective responses

II. Checklist variety

1. General attitude/interest perception

2. Highly detailed checklist covering scope of area (e.g. inservice)

3. Specific provisions of components (e.g. leaves for in-service)

4. Priority ranking

III. Scales

1. Expectations/perceptions

2. Evaluation (e.g. conditions)

IV. Discrepancy model

If a workshop design is followed, not only must the plan and schedule of the workshop be developed, but forms for the recording of data need to be worked out.

Open-ended:

1. What teacher inservice (professional development) needs/problems exist in this district?

   a.

   b.

   c.

2. Why do these needs/problems exist?

   a.

   b.

   c.

3. How can these needs/problems be corrected?

   a.

   b.

   c.

Open-ended:

1. As a teacher, how would you define your own professional needs? Or as an alternative question for educational leaders, how would you define the professional needs of teachers you work with?

2. What are your three most pressing professional needs?

3. Who should take responsibility for teachers' professional development? What do you feel the local association can and cannot do?

4. Do you consider instructional needs and professional needs synonymous, totally separate, or overlapping but with significant differences?

5. What relationships, if any, do you see between teachers' professional needs and legislation and other regulations in your state?

Checklist: Detailed Checklist

Please check below three programs in which you feel the greatest need exists for intensive inservice education (assume the education would be given during the day at district expense).

_____ Reading

_____ Mathematics

_____ Social Science

_____ English

_____ Science

_____ Health Science

_____ Literature

_____ Physical Education

_____ Spelling

_____ Foreign Language

_____ Art

_____ Music

_____ Industrial Arts

_____ Other

Discrepancy Model:

Responses to the questionnaire items should reflect your perception only. For each item, mark a number in the first column (labeled "what is") to show how often you think the condition described by the item exists in your school or school district. Then mark a number in the second column (labeled "what should be") to show how often you think the condition should exist.

Example: Using the following scale:

1 - Almost never or never

2 - Sometimes

3 - Frequently

4 - Almost always or always

	What is	What should be
1. Inservice education is individualized.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
2. District inservice education meets my needs.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
3. Teacher needs determine the inservice education program.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
4. This district provides time for teachers to attend professional meetings.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4
5. I have opportunities during the working day to acquire new knowledge and skills.	1 2 3 4	1 2 3 4

Scale: Expectation/Perception

Inservice Program Goals

Indicate your opinion of the importance of the goals by checking one of five equally spaced points provided. Indicate no opinion by checking the sixth column.

	Very Important			Moderately Important	Not At All Important	No Opinion
a. Programs are practitioner-designed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
b. Programs are publicly financed.	1	2	3	4	5	6
c. Inservice education is part of every teacher's job assignment.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Checklist: Priority Ranking

Priority Checklist

Below is a list of inservice items. Please rank these items from 1-5, with #1 having the highest priority, #2 the second highest, etc. These items are those which were submitted to the association via the recent survey. This is your opportunity to let your association know your wishes.

RANK	ITEM
_____	1. Expanded sabbatical leave policy.
_____	2. Intra-district visitations by teachers.
_____	3. Inservice program for selected teachers on the teaching of thinking, researching and studying techniques, followed by a pilot program with emphasis on these techniques for students.
_____	4. District-wide workshops on school time for upgrading instruction in areas of curriculum and for identifying and dealing with behavioral learning problems.
_____	5. Inservice program to qualify all primary teachers as reading specialists, paid for by the district.
_____	6. Tuition reimbursements for inservice credits.
_____	7. Release time for work on curriculum development.
_____	8. Compensation for attendance at inservice workshops or conferences outside the district.

Checklist: Specific Provision

A. STATE-WIDE, INSERVICE DAY

1. Have you attended a workshop or meeting during the last two years? Yes____ No____

2. Did you apply for reimbursement? Yes____ No____

3. Were you reimbursed for: Mileage? Yes____ No____

   Lodging? Yes____ No____

   Food? Yes____ No____

4. Did you receive full reimbursement for expenses? Yes____ No____

B. LEAVE OF ABSENCE:

1. Have you applied for a leave of absence during the last three or four years? Yes____ No____

2. Was it: Sabbatical leave? Yes____ No____

   Maternity leave? Yes____ No____

   Other? (Please specify) _____

3. Was your application granted? Yes____ No____

Scale: Evaluation

Instructions: Each of the following items is a problem to some teachers in some schools. Check each to the degree you feel it is a problem to you.

	PROBLEMS AS IT AFFECTS YOUR WORK			
	Little	Limited	Considerable	Crucial
a. I have no say in the design of district inservice.				
b. There are no inservice education components when innovative programs are introduced by the district.				
c. Too few sabbatical leaves are granted by the district.				
d. Teachers have to attend inservice workshops or conferences on their own time.				

Checklist: General Attitude/Interest/Perception

INSERVICE EDUCATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Indicate your interest in having the school system provide opportunities to learn more about:

	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not Interested
1. The ways students learn (e.g., learning styles, motivation, reinforcement, rentention)			
2. A teaching area:			
o reading			
o language			
o mathematics			
o science			
o social studies			
o the arts			
o other:_____			
3. Teaching skills:			
o classroom management			
o individualized instruction			
o inquiry technique			
o value clarification			
o students teaching students			
o other:_____			
4. Alternative organizational patterns:			
o team teaching			
o open classroom			
o nongrading			
o year-round schools			
o other:_____			
5. Instructional materials:			
o teacher-prepared			
o new curriculum projects			
o programmed instruction			
o technology--use of TV, radio, etc.			
o other:_____			
6. Other (please specify):			
o _____			
o _____			
o _____			

(continued)

What format would you like used if you were to participate in a professional development program such as those described above?

	Very Interested	Somewhat Interested	Not Interested
a. Time for exchange of ideas with colleagues	_____	_____	_____
b. Demonstration lessons taught by other teachers	_____	_____	_____
c. Visits to other programs	_____	_____	_____
d. Programmed instruction	_____	_____	_____
e. Workshops with high participant involvement	_____	_____	_____
f. A series of presentations by knowledgeable people	_____	_____	_____
g. Study at a college or university, either degree or nondegree	_____	_____	_____
h. Time to attend professional conferences or conventions	_____	_____	_____
i. Sabbatical leave	_____	_____	_____
j. Student feedback of their perceptions	_____	_____	_____
k. Videotaping and analysis of a teaching unit	_____	_____	_____
l. Time for independent study or research	_____	_____	_____
m. Exchange of roles (counselor, librarian, etc.)	_____	_____	_____
n. Other (please specify):			
o _____	_____	_____	_____
o _____	_____	_____	_____
o _____	_____	_____	_____

Workshop

DESIGN FOR A NEEDS ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

First Hour

Step 1. Form groups of approximately six persons each.

Step 2. Select group leaders and recorders. (Use some automatic device such as the one nearest the door, the person wearing the most red, etc.)

Step 3. Assign and work on the following tasks:

a. Each person in the group (group leader included) should talk about what is his/her one greatest problem in helping students learn. (Ruled out of order for this task are such considerations as too large a class, worry about too small a paycheck, or other school administrative or personal concerns. The focus is on teaching skills: motivation, diagnosing learning difficulties, etc.)

b. After each person has had an opportunity to state his/her problem, the leader should ask each to say why he/she thinks it is a problem.

c. As a third task, the leader should ask each participant to try to identify what one skill or knowledge he/she needs to do a better job in the particular problem area identified.

d. All members of the group should assist the recorder in filling out Report Form I.

Second Hour

Step 1. Working alone, group members should jot down two, three, or more personal learning experiences that have led to better performance as a teacher. It doesn't matter whether the activities were individual or group, job-related or not, in-school or out-of-school, formal or informal, credit or noncredit. The only thing that counts is, was it a learning experience?

Step 2. Individuals should then share their experiences with other members of the group.

Step 3. Recalling both the preceding experiences and the earlier work group identification of problems, members of the group should begin to help each other think out the best ways of acquiring needed skills, knowledges, or information. Be imaginative. Assume released time. Try to figure out the way each would learn best, not necessarily the easiest or least expensive way. Each

person in the group should relate what he/she thinks is a desirable learning experience for the need he/she identified earlier.

Step 4. All members of the groups should assist the recorder in filling out Report Form II, to be handed in to the workshop leader along with Form I.

Step 5. (Time permitting.) All workshop participants should work as a large group and begin to generalize policy guidelines that the association might present to the board of education and which reflect the tone, spirit, and overall intent of the group's philosophy of meaningful inservice education.

Workshop Report Form I

What were the problems (needs) identified? There can be no more listed than the number in the small group. Each participant was to support only his/her most pressing instructional concern or anxiety. List in "how to" terms. If there is consensus on one or two, list only those.

1. How to...
2. How to...
3. How to...
4. How to...
5. How to...
6. How to...

List, in an order corresponding to the above, the reason given as to why the particular problem exists.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

List, again in corresponding order, the skills or knowledges most needed to strengthen or improve skills or otherwise overcome the problem area.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

Workshop Report Form II

Problem (Need)	Matching Learning Experience
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.
4.	4.
5.	5.
6.	6.